

## REMARKS

Applicants respectfully request that the Examiner enter this amendment and pass claims 44-47 and 66-79 to issue.

Claims 44-57 and (renumbered) 66-79 are pending in the application, with claims 44 and 66 being independent. Claims 66-72 have been amended herein.

Applicants' representative apologizes for mistakenly adding 14 new claims (now identified as Claims 66-79), which were substantial duplicates of present claims 44-57, in the preliminary amendment filed on May 24, 2000. Claims 66-72 are amended herein to improve their clarity and to ensure that claims 66-79 are not duplicative of claims 44-57.

In an office action mailed November 21, 2000, election was required among the following species:

Group A:

Species I, Figure 3

Species II, Figure 4

Species III, Figure 5

Group B:

Species IV, Claim 55

Species V, Claim 56

Species VI, Claim 57

From Group A, Applicants hereby elect Species I for prosecution on the merits, without traverse.

Claims readable on Species I include: 44, 45, 49-57, 66, 67 and 71-79. Currently, at least claims 44 and 66 are believed to be generic.

Regarding Group B, Applicants respectfully traverse that election of species requirement. A careful review of the subject specification reveals that the various embodiments are so closely related as to not require separate fields of search. Accordingly, neither Applicants nor the Patent and Trademark Office should be put through the trouble and expense entailed in multiple filings and prosecutions. Moreover, Applicants submit that the public-at-large should not be required to obtain and study several separate patents in order to have available all of the issued patent claims covering the subject invention. Further, the making of an election of species requirement is not

mandatory in all instances where it is possible to do so; rather, the Examiner has discretion to choose not require an election where circumstances warrant. It is believed that such is the case here. Therefore, Applicants request, under 37 CFR 1.143, that the Examiner reconsider and withdraw the election requirement with respect to Group B.

Nevertheless, pursuant to 37 CFR 1.146, Applicants hereby provisionally elect, with traverse, Species V, namely claim 56. It is assumed that Claim 78 also defines Species V, since it is commensurate with claim 56.

Please charge any additional fees or credit overpayment to Deposit Account No. 15-0750, Order No. OT-4190B.

Respectfully submitted,

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